Pacific School of Religion Berkeley, Calif.

The Social Questions Bulletin

Issued Monthly Except July and August by

THE METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE

An organization which seeks to abolish the profit system in order to develop a classless society based upon the obligation of mutual service.

150 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

EDITORS: HARRY F. WARD; WINIFRED L. CHAPPELL

The general policies of this publication are determined by the Executive Committee of the Methodist Federation for Social Service, subject to approval by the General Council of the Federation. The selection of topics and material is committed to the Secretaries, who are responsible to the Federation and to the public for its accuracy.

Entered as second-class matter January 21, 1919, at the Postoffice at New York, N. Y., under Act of August 24, 1912. 312

Vol. 24 **DECEMBER, 1934** **No. 10**

A MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS

THE SITUATION

The situation that we confront is one that moves steadily in the direction described in our Bulletin of last November. (If you file it, confirm this by reading the paragraphs "What We Face" and "Strategy.")

Whatever may be the surface ups and downs of the New Deal, the general trend is against recovery. Unemployment, the nemesis of the capitalist system, is not solved; there are over half a million more out of jobs now than last year. The standard of living and of culture for the majority of the people is slowly dropping. The tragedy is that so many are getting used to it. The promised right of labor to bargain collectively has not been realized in the key industries. Education, health and recreation for the masses are decreasing, poverty and crime are increasing. The concentration upon the policy of raising prices, the resultant huge profits of the intrenched monopoly groups, guarantees more misery for the masses. As the pledging of the nation's credit in the effort to artificially restore the profit system increases, the control of the bankers over the situation tightens. The conflict between the classes, inherent in the nature of capitalist society, moves steadily into the field of direct action. Strikes increase and are constantly accompanied by physical conflicts. Lawless acts by agents of the government are multiplied and vigilante terrorism grows. These outbreaks now appear in the agricultural struggle. In the background preparations for war are accelerated. This is a picture of the disintegration of society, the price that has to be paid for the continuance of the profit system. These are the symptoms of the development of Fascism. Its economic aspect is already with us. If its reign is to be shortened, if its repressive political and cultural aspects are to be prevented, a union of all the forces that have declared themselves against the profit system is imperative.

WAR AND FASCISM

Signs of War. The United States expects to wage war. What else is the meaning of: the vast military expenditures (war budget for fiscal year $2,502,593,000); the detailed and realistic war preparations; the unanimous opinion of the Supreme Court in the California conscientious objectors' case that the individual is entitled to no mind and no conscience in regard to war; that he is obligated to defend the government "against all enemies"; the revival of the discredited War Policies Commission proposal to take the profits out of war (approved for some reason by the very ones who made big profits before), and the President's immediate appointment of a commission to draft legislation to this end; the State Department plan for American neutrality in case of war (which means accepting war instead of counselling with nations against it, as provided for in the Kellogg Pact); the drive to arm the CCC boys.

Signs of Fascism. Equally obvious is the drift to Fascism. Add to the points noted in the October and November Bulletin these: The carefully prepared and intensive drive on Congress by the organized industrialists of the country, the National Manufacturers' Association and the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, (1) for anti-labor legislation (i.e., for legalization of the open shop and the company union; for outlawing the sympathetic strike; for preventing such limitation of hours as the workers are proposing in their 30-hour bill; for indefinite postponement of social insurance); and (2) for endorsement of a Federal sedition bill (which means that anyone who says or prints, or meets with others to consider, anything favoring basic social change can be thrown into jail);

the proposal of War and Navy Department representatives to the committee investigating un-American activities that it endorse the penalizing of any attempt to get a soldier or sailor to "violate his oath of allegiance"; the army officers' recommendation before the munitions investigating committee that section 7a of the NRA be abrogated in war time.

If this suppressive legislation is passed it will be used first to outlaw the Communists; then to smash labor unions; then against liberals who are trying to get social change. It will mean that for the present the American brand of Fascism will be a New Deal, social welfare type.

The Tie-up. War and Fascism have the same origin. Both are the fruit of capitalism's inability to solve its economic problems. They are organized by the same people to do the same thing—to protect the profit seekers in their privilege and power. The tie-up is shown concretely just now by the personnel the President is appointing to take care of the new wartime proposals. Bernard Baruch, of the War Industries Board (records of whose possible war profits have been destroyed) and General Johnson, who organized the draft and whose business and NRA record have proved him bitterly anti-labor, are set to draft legislation to take the profits out of war. Irénee DuPont, along with other leading industrialists, has been made a member of the Ordnance Advisory Board of the War Department.

Against War and Fascism. Against this situation the anti-war pledges of the preachers (even when, as in many cases, they recognize the economic basis of war) are ineffectual—because they are individual. War represents mass mobilization. It can be met only by a mass counter-offensive. This is the strategy of the American League Against War and Fascism (with which the Methodist Federation for Social Service by vote of its Annual Meeting has affiliated. Send to the office of the League, 112 East 19th St., New York, for its program and instructions on how to affiliate. Social Service commissions should affiliate direct. Individual churches may affiliate with city committees. Members may start city committees and local branches.) It proposes that workers and farmers and intellectuals withdraw their services from the war machine. If they do this, it can't operate. If the government knows they are going to do this it will be slower to get into war. Part of the same program is the educating of the people as to the meaning and signs of Fascism so that they will not be taken in by its false promises. Also there are concrete things to be done—checking the first development of terrorism in the local community by defending the rights of workers, white collar workers, farmers and other exploited groups to strike, demonstrate, etc.

ON THE FIRING LINE

Some church folk are already doing these things. Here are a few examples:

On the Side of Strikers. In San Francisco during the longshoremen's strike Dr. George P. Hedley frequented the waterfront and got valuable firsthand experience which he has passed on to others in many addresses and in a leaflet, "The San Francisco Strike as I Have Seen It." Church youth, headed by Al Hamilton, in San Pedro during the same strike escorted five groups of young people about the fifty-mile picket line where they talked with longshoremen and saw for themselves the stockade into which arrested strikers were thrown. Up in Portland, R. W. Anderson agitated among preachers in an effort to get them to publicly endorse the collective bargaining rights for which the Methodist Church has declared. Nelson Cruikshank, of New Haven, has done a serious piece of work in defense of the workers at the Whitney-Blake plant, preparing proofs for submission to the National Labor Board of discrimination against union men. Howard McGrath, of Kingston, N. Y., addressed a meeting of Amalgamated Clothing Workers' strikers in the Fuller Shirt factory and had three strikers address his Sunday evening church service. Union Seminary students picketed the Waldorf-Astoria when the hotel workers were on strike. A young Brooklyn layman whose job gives him every fourth week off spends that week in leadership of a group gathering good firsthand information on labor disputes in Brooklyn and in activities based on the findings. (See the December issue of *Economic Justice,* New Haven, for the way preachers took a hand together in a New England town during the textile strike.) Farmers' strikes and struggles are part of this picture. A later issue of the Bulletin will tell what some rural preachers are doing.

For Civil Rights. Some California preachers are members of a Committee on Labor's Civil Rights which has brought them face to face—sometimes to their own surprise—with the industrial conflict in that state. Several members of the New York area Social Service commissions joined in a vigorous protest by letter against the arrest in Danielson, Connecticut, of Donald Wiley, theological seminary student for handing out *Daily Worker* reprints during the textile strike. In Boston, D. D. Vaughan of the Theological Seminary gathered and then used facts on the case of workers and students arrested in an anti-Fascist demonstration and he and his students visited the protestors in jail.

With the Unemployed, W. H. Stewart of the M. E. Church at Baldwin, L. I., has not only organized and headed up for four years the large-scale relief program in Nassau

Co., but has identified himself with the organized unemployed. Norman L. Trott, of the Milton Ave. M. E. Church, Baltimore, has organized a People's Unemployment League local in his neighborhood, has picketed with the unemployed before the Baltimore relief headquarters protesting relief cuts and has spoken on adequate relief at out-of-door rallies. Paul DuBois, of Prospect M. E. Church, Bristol, Conn., is working with the unemployed organization there and serves as its treasurer. Albany preachers made vigorous protest and demanded an investigation when the police attacked the state hunger marchers; H. G. Hageman, of Trinity M. E. Church, who was out of the city at the time, sent a letter to the mayor asking to have his protest recorded. W. B. Waltmire in Chicago got in on the ground floor in organizing the unemployed there several years ago and has stayed by. Recently he headed a march of 10,000 unemployed to the mayor.

With Negroes. While Mark Chamberlain was pastor in Tomahawk, Wisc., his church school gave six Sunday mornings to studying the question of the Negro in America. Two neighboring Negro families helped. There were stories, talks, discussion sessions and the singing of spirituals; use of a Negro quartet; entertainment of a Negro baseball team. The young people took race relations seriously and mixed freely with the Negroes in social gatherings in the face of community criticism. Eugene Shrigley, pastor of Richmond Hill, N. Y., carried out a somewhat similar educational program and was able to give it a point because of his proximity to New York City. He concluded by taking his group on one of Clarence Howell's Reconciliation Trips to Negro Harlem and ended the day with having them see the vigorous drama "Stevedore," which portrays the Negro part in the class struggle. He is making the experience the basis for joint participation of Negroes and whites in the struggle against race discrimination in schools and city hospitals in his community. In Tyranza, Ark., Ward Rogers, a young Methodist preacher, is living in poverty among the Negro and white share-croppers and tenant farmers, actively identifying himself with these most exploited groups and helping organize them.

Note that these activities are for the most part by individuals or small groups. How can the experience be shared in such a way as to develop joint programs—in the local communities first and then on a wider front?

UNDERPINNING

Investigation. Church studies that lift the lid showing the social situation supplement the facts learned by personal participation. On numerous occasions the Federal Council of Churches has made such surveys. In California last year the State Church Federation made a study of the strikes of migratory agricultural workers in the Imperial Valley and the wretched conditions that underlay them. This was put into the hands of the preachers. Recently Bishop Baker appointed a committee to join with other citizens in looking into the conditions of the Los Angeles street car men threatening to strike. All such studies need to be interpreted in the light of their bearing on the struggle to get rid of the profit system and to get the classless society. And activity based on them must be such as to strengthen the resistance of the workers to oppression.

Every preachers' meeting and conference commission should now have a standing committee to get the facts concerning any local social conflict and immediately bring in or send around recommendations for action.

Legislation. In the early days of the social movement in the church it was common for church folk to work hard for remedial legislation. Nowadays they may work for direct relief of sufferers, defense of civil rights and enforcement of protective laws. All such legislation should be assessed and used in relation to getting rid of the profit system. The committee headed by the Brooklyn layman, mentioned above, has led in an active effort to get legislation in New York which will implement the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-injunction Act. It was a concrete task. A group of Brooklyn steamship transportation companies had an injunction served against teamsters and longshoremen's unions which were refusing to handle freight brought to the piers in trucks manned by non-union labor. The struggle was recognized by the committee as a "fight on the part of organized labor to meet organized capital and organized wealth."

Study and Discussion. Once more we suggest the self classification by our members on the basis of their attitude toward the profit system; and a meeting by each with others of like thought for study and discussion. Our Crisis Leaflets are designed to help such study groups. (1) You know something is wrong with the economic order. What is it? The first six Leaflets analyze the profit system. (2) In your own mind you are through with capitalism. But you don't know quite what kind of a society you want. The second six Leaflets outline briefly the nature of the new society. (3) You know what you want, but you don't know how to get it. We are at work on a third series of Leaflets which will deal with the strategy of social change. Our Bulletins also are prepared with these possible discussion groups in mind. Again this year as last we are analyzing the New Deal as it changes from month to month. The italicized questions are designed to give point to the factual material that the Bulletins carry and thus to make them more useful for study groups. The objective should be not

mere information, but the developing of the capacity to analyze current trends and decide upon action.

Pronouncements. It has become customary for the Social Service commissions to formulate statements on the social scene and introduce them on the conference floor. Sometimes these are merely perfunctory, but the tendency is for them to become more incisive and clear cut. Are they of any use? If they represent careful facing of the issue, their preparation and the discussion they provoke will be educational. The New York East commission educates itself in the long-time process of getting the statement ready. Sometimes the discussions on the floor reveal or result in a line-up. Some reports: "The Ohio conference tore our commission's report all to pieces, eliminating a very strong preamble and several strong resolutions denouncing capitalism as a system." "Of course some of the die-hards (Northern Minnesota conference) fought tooth and nail to defeat it (commission report) or to pull its teeth—but to no avail." "The battle line has been drawn in this (Wisconsin) conference."

Propaganda. Times of crisis are always the occasion for pamphleteering. Much factual material is constantly coming from the press in this inexpensive form. The office is continually recommending pamphlets and books. There should be many more inquiries for this information. How can propaganda material be distributed? The following ways used by members and others to get our Crisis Leaflets circulated may be suggestive for other material as well: They are handed out like tracts; printed in church bulletins; mailed by preachers to their members; sold at literature tables at churches and conferences; sold to students by hand-picked men in seminaries; used as a basis for discussion in church and school classes. Some groups are having them printed on cheap paper for wide distribution. How many church folk concerned with social change are using to the limit the press and especially their local press? There is a technique for its use that can be discovered by those who are interested.

MORE PERSONAL

All these things have got to be supported and promoted by an organization that supplies material and stimulation. And that organization must itself be supported and extended by those who want it to stay in the field.

Extension. We should have many new members on the one dollar basis voted by our membership. The Bulletin is a membership publication. Its analyses are available for the most part only to members and those to whom the members show their copies. Can you use it in getting new recruits? The Wisconsin Social Service commission has a membership committee. Its chairman, O. L. Merritt, keeps sending a few names of new members found—preachers, business men, professional men. The Erie conference commission year after year takes care of renewals and gets a few new members. Some other commissions and some members are doing the same thing—but not nearly enough of them. Can members and commissions devise new ways to get our Crisis Leaflets distributed? The New York East Social Service commission aspires to lead off. It plans to get the Leaflets into the hands of all the preachers in the conference and of leading laymen. We suggest "socialist competition" by commissions and members in getting memberships; in distributing the Leaflets and Bulletins; in getting action.

Tying in Youth. One way to extend this movement is to enlist youth. The National Youth Congress in Evanston revealed what some of the young people are thinking about. One of them writes, "It would surprise some of the leaders if they knew how far left some of the Methodist young people are." The Congress is being organized in all the annual conferences. Members and commissions may well take note of this. The year's program of the Wisconsin conference calls specifically for putting youth on its action committees. There should be a united front with the young people in the struggle to abolish the profit system and get the classless society.

Finance. We need money. In fact we must have it if we are to pay our bills the next few months. Last year, as we reminded you in the November Bulletin, was an experimental year. Could we keep going even with the drastic cut voted by our Annual Meeting—from the previous minimum of $7,000 to $4,000? We did—just barely. So again we have been voted $4,000 and thereby instructed to keep going awhile longer. The two things we need money for are, first, to meet that minimum budget. Even that small amount is hard to raise on the $1 basis. Second, to extend our activities: to put out the third series of our Crisis Leaflets now in preparation; to promote the distribution of those already out; to issue a weekly press service to church papers; to discover and enlist new church forces for action in these momentous times.

Can you send us $2 instead of $1? If you are one of those absolutely indispensable supporting members who contributes $5 and up, can you add a dollar or two, or double your giving? Can you discover some little financial reservoir in your community—someone who will finance one of the extension items? *Let us hear from you—by return mail if possible.*